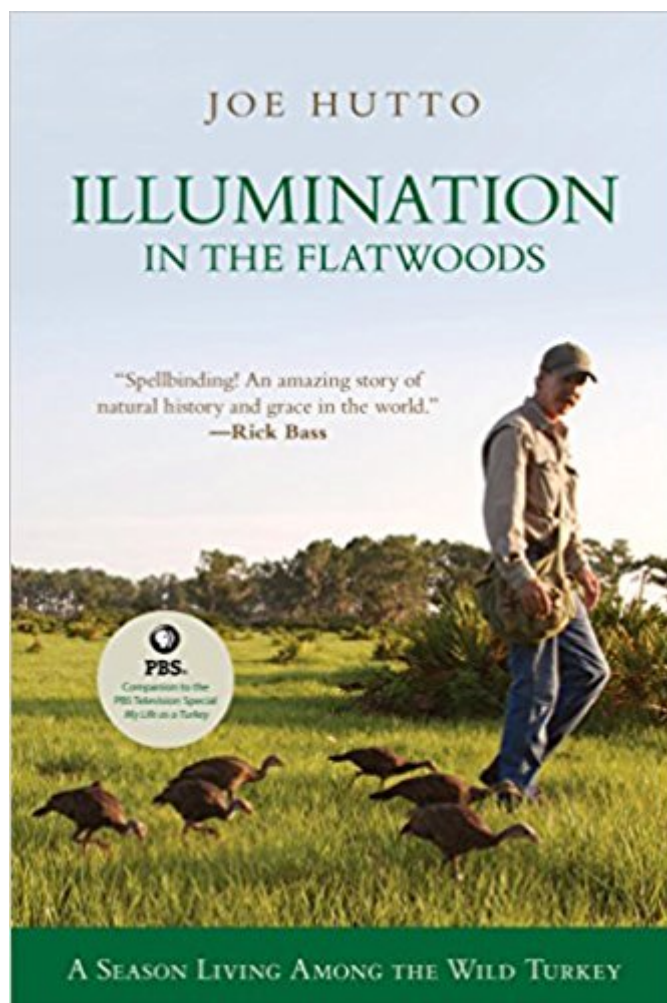


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ILLUMINATION In The Flatwoods: A Season With The Wild Turkey



Synopsis

An unforgettable story about the fascinating behavior of the most elusive of wild game birds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Turkeys, Joe Hutto writes, have gotten a bad rap for being, well, stupid creatures. In his account of a year spent studying a flock of wild turkeys in the loblolly pine woods of Florida, he aims to improve their reputation. They are, he notes, masters of disguise, blending in with their surroundings in ways so subtle as to make the work of predators--especially human hunters--difficult. And, he writes, they are "curious to a fault, want a working understanding of every aspect of their surroundings, and their memory is impeccable." His affectionate portrait may not convince English speakers to stop calling each other turkeys, but it will make welcome reading for birders and wildfowl enthusiasts. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wildlife artist Hutto embarked on an unusual study of wild turkeys: he obtained two dozen eggs, incubated them and imprinted himself on the hatchlings, with unexpected results. It was, he says, exhausting, enlightening and one of the most rewarding experiences of his life. His account of raising the brood is an engaging story of an unlikely relationship between species. For six months Hutto spent nearly every waking moment with the young turkeys (four males and 10 females reached maturity), accompanying them on walks in the flatlands of northern Florida, roosting with them at night (until they went to sleep) and observing their behavior. By late summer, he felt so

much a part of the flock that smooth green grasshoppers began to look appetizing. In October, Hutto's flock met native wild turkeys, and they dispersed. In an epilogue, he tells how they fared. This tale should have wide appeal to hunters and nature- and animal-lovers. Who would have dreamed turkeys could be so interesting? Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I cannot imagine what any author might have done to teach us more about wild animals while teaching us more about ourselves. Hutto spent every hour of every day for well over a year with his subjects, talking to them while they were still in the egg, awaking before dawn to be with them, walking with them day after day in heat and rain, and roosting with them at night. The author's sacrifice in learning about wild turkeys puts him in that rare group of researchers who lived with their subjects, and came to understand them on their terms: Goodall, Schaller, Fosse. Hutto is a fabulous thinker, and "illumination" is about what we can learn through his eyes, and what his turkeys were willing to teach him. Five years from now, biology students will be reading this book in the way that they once read Tinbergen or Lorenz. The writing here is as good as nature writing can get. It tells a similar story to the award-winning PBS documentary derived from the book (see [...]) but with much more detail, and much more reflection on the meanings of things. When you're finished, you'll be wanting to read his other books -- *The Light in High Places* (about Bighorn Sheep) and *Touching the Wild* (about Mule Deer). Do so. You may find this one the best.

I admit that I grinned and chuckled when a friend - whose taste I trust - offered to lend this book. Was she serious? She was indeed and she was so right to urge me to give it a chance. It's wonderful. HOWEVER, the newest edition (2006) does not have the color photographs from the two earlier editions and that's a shame. You need to see *Turkeyboy*, et al. I'll be the only reviewer rating *Illumination in the Flatwoods* fewer than 5 stars and I hope this captures the attention of potential buyers. Get an older edition.

I haven't finished reading it all yet, but skipping around to different areas doesn't matter, as I had recently seen the NATURE episode, "My Life as a Turkey" [first aired November 15, 2011; episode can still be seen via PBS website] and I just had to have this book! For me it brought back some of the happiest years of my youth, visiting relatives who lived in central Florida in the 1950s and 1960s before it succumbed to the Empire of the Mouse. In the early 1960s my grandmother kept house for her sister's widower [Samuel Daniel Story], at the time working for the vast 7Cs ranch owned by the

Chandler [sp?] family outside Kissimmee. The cracker-style farmhouse was deep inside the ranch, well away from city noises, not even any neighbors. I have no idea how she found them, but would feed the quail and wild turkeys, attracting them using calls she had made up during years of living in northern Ontario. When word of her 'turkey talk' skills spread to the local game wardens, they asked for her help in trapping and banding. She was quite a naturalist, though the concept had yet to evolve. My uncle would borrow a horse for me to ride during visits ~ I never tired of the unspoiled areas of central Florida. Though I never saw any turkeys while riding, my Nana had endless stories about these magnificent creatures. I'm enjoying learning about a different area of the state, with the many drawings and photos. This book would definitely make a lovely gift for anyone who enjoys the Florida that gave way to golf courses and neon. I realize this is more about family and a lost era, but the story will hold up well for readers who have never even been to Florida.

It takes a true commitment to imprint a creature on oneself, as all pet owners know. But to make a creature of the wild turn to you for all its wants and needs, without fully understanding what those wants and needs will be, takes another level of commitment altogether. The author takes the reader from egg to sad separation, describing every high and low moment in the lives of the young turkeys he raised in the Florida woods. There are lessons for the naturalist, like why the survival rate of young wild turkeys is lower in wet springs than in dry, and for the next person that wants to try to take on this task. The tale of Turkey Boy, the last of the males to leave the author's side, is both fascinating and heart-rending. After finishing the last page, my first thought was, "Wow, I wonder what else this guy has written." There can be no greater indicator of success for an author.

Joe Hutto has opened the doors of perception for us in this engaging remembrance of his nearly two years of dedication parenting a flock of wild turkeys. Truly an astonishing accomplishment, this beautifully written journal of adventures with his flock admits us to the magical world of wild creatures. Funny, wise, and profound, he comes to believe -- and to convince this reader, that these creatures are born with considerably more wisdom than we humans are capable of acquiring in a lifetime. Anyone who loves nature and has an open mind will love this book, and the astonishing documentary that it inspired. Joe Hutto just might be our generation's Aldo Leopold/Rachel Carson. If even a small number of the folks touched by his creations speak out about the destruction or replacement of native habitat with sterile mono-culture, or the decimation of the mule deer and other iconic species whose losses diminish our world, the chance for a recovery will increase. Please keep on writing and filming, Joe. We hear your heart breaking; our hearts break, too. I hope you

take some small comfort from those of us whose eyes have been opened by your singular work.

If you love turkey hunting, or just birds and nature, you'll be captivated by this book. The illustrations done in pencil, are very detailed and beautiful. I didn't think this was going to be an emotional book, but I became attached to the individual turkeys.

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